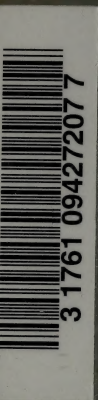
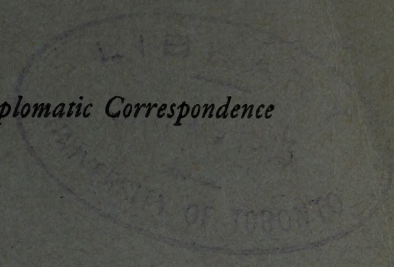


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# BRITAIN AND TURKEY

THE CAUSES OF THE RUPTURE

*Set out, in brief form, from the Diplomatic Correspondence*



BY

SIR EDWARD COOK  
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## PREFATORY NOTE

FOR reasons briefly indicated at the beginning of this Pamphlet, it seems desirable that the history of the rupture between Great Britain and Turkey should be widely known. The course of events is described very fully in the White Paper of "Correspondence respecting Events leading to the Rupture of Relations with Turkey." This Paper ("Miscellaneous," No. 13, 1914) should be in the hands of everyone who has time to master it; it may be obtained through any bookseller, price 9d. It is, however, long (77 pages), containing 184 documents which deal with a large number of different matters; and not everyone has the time to read, or the habit of easily digesting, so complicated a series of diplomatic proceedings.

A Pamphlet by the same author, giving in brief and simple form a *résumé* of the now famous White Paper of "Correspondence respecting the European Crisis," has been found useful by many people; and this fact has led to the preparation of the present Pamphlet, in which a *résumé* on similar lines is given of the immediate causes leading to war between Great Britain and her Allies on the one side, and Turkey as the ally of Germany on the other.

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The White Paper deals with a large mass of detail. In the following pages the more salient and essential points are given, and an attempt is made to render the story more easily intelligible by following separately and in logical order each thread in the tangled skein.

If any reader should desire to buy copies of the Pamphlet for distribution, special terms may be obtained on application either to the Publishers, or to the Secretary of the Victoria League (2, Woodstreet, Westminster, S.W.).

# BRITAIN AND TURKEY

## THE CAUSES OF THE RUPTURE

THE entrance of Turkey as an open belligerent into the great war is an event of importance to Europe, Africa, and Asia, and of some peculiar significance to Great Britain. The participation of Turkey extends the sphere of the war to fresh regions of Asia and Africa. The settlement of the "Eastern Question" in Europe, which was already involved in the issues of the war, must now become of wider scope and of yet more absorbing interest. To the British Empire many of the questions involved in Turkey's action are of special importance. The Turkish Empire had been bound to Great Britain, as His Majesty King George recently reminded the Sultan, "by a friendship of more than a century." Britain was in administrative occupation of lands which still acknowledged the suzerainty of the Sultan. The realm of the King-Emperor is, politically, the greatest of Mohammedan States, and in the Mohammedan world the Sultan of Turkey occupies, religiously, an influential place. From all these points of view it is of real importance that the events leading to the



rupture of relations between Great Britain and Turkey should be understood clearly and rightly; that every British subject, and if possible every Mohammedan community throughout the world, should know who strove to keep the peace and who, as principals or as accessories, insisted upon making war.

The facts have been told very fully in the White Paper of Official Correspondence issued by the British Government. In the following pages the principal facts are given in a shorter, and (it is hoped) a readily intelligible, form.

#### *Alleged Grievances by Turkey*

At the outbreak of the European War there were some ships in course of construction in Great Britain for the Turkish Government. The British Government, in accordance with the usual international practice in such circumstances, retained the ships. There was nothing exceptional in this treatment of Turkey. The same thing was done in the case of ships on order for other countries. Sir Edward Grey immediately intimated the Government's intention (August 3rd), explaining the "necessity for His Majesty's Government to keep all warships available in England for their own needs in this crisis," and promising that "financial and other loss to Turkey will receive all due consideration" (August 4). This assurance from the Government was supplemented by a personal message from the King, wishing "the Sultan to understand that the exigencies of the

defence of the King's dominions are the only cause of the detention of these ships, which His Majesty hopes will not be for long, it being the intention of His Majesty's Government to restore them to the Ottoman Government at the end of the war in the event of the maintenance of a strict neutrality by Turkey" (August 25th).

This natural and necessary action by Great Britain, which could not by international usage reasonably be represented as unfriendly to Turkey, was nevertheless made a ground of grievance. The Grand Vizier said it was "an unfriendly act." He and the Minister of the Interior dwelt in moving terms upon the sacrifices and public subscriptions which had been made for the purchase of the ships. The Grand Vizier even alleged that the requisitioning of the ships by Great Britain "had caused the whole crisis" (August 18th).

The sincerity of these allegations may be tested by other statements. The Grand Vizier explained that the Turkish Government had to pretend to the Turkish public "that they were taking a stronger line than really was the case" (August 9th). The Sultan, in an audience granted to the Ambassador (Sir L. Mallet),<sup>1</sup> while deploring the detention of the ships, "stated his conviction that they would be given back," as he was not going to depart from neutrality (September 21st). Meanwhile the outraged feelings

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted in reading the White Paper that the Ambassador was absent from Constantinople at the beginning of August. The earlier despatches are to and from his representative during absence (Mr. Beaumont).



of "the Turkish public" were not, it seems, inconsolable. The Minister of the Interior stated (September 6th) that "the Turkish Government now wished to sell us two Turkish ships outright. They wanted money badly, as the economic situation was desperate. I replied," says Sir L. Mallet, "that I did not know His Majesty's Government's views, which I would enquire, but that, personally, I should be reluctant to inflict so mortal a stab on the wounded heart of the Turkish people, who were already suffering so much by temporary detention of their ships. Their purchase might give rise to another tempest of indignation." The urbane irony of the Ambassador was doubtless appreciated by the Turkish Minister, but it covered a more serious point. "Moreover," continued Sir L. Mallet, "I doubted whether His Majesty's Government would readily pay several millions to a country which was entirely in German hands, and which was breathing out threats against ourselves and our Allies." How true was this statement, we shall learn in the sequel.

Another possible ground for manufacturing a grievance was forestalled by the British Government. It was being alleged "that the annexation of Egypt" (thereby abolishing the Turkish suzerainty) "is under consideration by His Majesty's Government." Sir Edward Grey at once (August 7th) instructed the British representative at Constantinople to contradict this report emphatically to the Turkish Government, and to give the following assurance: "If Turkey remains neutral and Egypt remains quiet, and should no unforeseen circumstances arise,



His Majesty's Government do not propose to alter the status of Egypt." When—for very good reasons (as will presently appear)—certain defensive measures were taken in that country, Sir E. Grey at once informed Turkey. "In order that there may be no room for misconception, inform Turkish Government that Egyptian Government are taking measures to patrol Suez Canal on both banks, and that this step is necessary to protect the safe and proper working of the Canal. You should add that no advance into Sinai, nor military operations in that region, are under contemplation" (September 1st).

It will thus be seen that grievances against Great Britain alleged by Turkey had no foundation. On the other hand, Turkey received from Great Britain and her Allies the most positive and solid assurances of friendship and support in the event of real neutrality being maintained.

### *British Promises to Turkey*

The attitude of the Turkish Government at this point deserves careful notice. At the beginning of the war (as for weeks and months later) they declared their intention of maintaining strict neutrality. The assurances in this sense were positive; the declaration was unconditional (see p. 10). They then committed breaches of neutrality (p. 11), and proceeded to suggest that Great Britain and her Allies should pay them a price. On August 20th, the following terms were submitted to the British Ambassador:—(1) Abolition of the "Capitulations"; (2) Immediate return of the requisitioned Turkish

battleships ; (3) Renunciation of any interference with the internal affairs of Turkey ; (4) If Bulgaria should intervene against the Triple Entente, Western Thrace to be given back to Turkey ; (5) The Greek Islands to be restored to Turkey. The Turkish Government, at the time of making these proposals, were still harbouring German battleships. Sir Edward Grey in reply (August 22nd), said that " the demands made by the Turkish Government are excessive " ; but nevertheless did not refuse all discussion. The British Government made concessions about the Capitulations (see p. 17), and, for the rest, gave, in spite of Turkey's equivocal attitude, both before and after the receipt of the proposals just enumerated, assurances of protection and support.

These assurances, in which Great Britain's Allies concurred, were not only positive but repeated, as will be seen from the following despatches of Sir Edward Grey to the British representative at Constantinople :—

(*August 16*).—As soon as the French and Russian Ambassadors are similarly instructed, you are authorised to declare to Turkish Government that, if Turkey will observe scrupulous neutrality during the war, England, France, and Russia will uphold her independence and integrity against any enemies that may wish to utilise the general European complication in order to attack her.<sup>1</sup>

(*August 18*).—I told the Turkish Ambassador, who had expressed uneasiness as to our intentions towards Turkey, that Turkey would have nothing to fear from us, and that

<sup>1</sup> Apparently the French and Russian instructions were at once received, for Sir E. Grey's declaration was made to the Grand Vizier on August 18.



her integrity would be preserved in any conditions of peace which affected the Near East, provided that she preserved a real neutrality. . . .

(*August 22*).—[In the same event] the three Allied Powers will give a joint guarantee in writing that they will respect the independence and integrity of Turkey, and will engage that no conditions in the terms of peace at the end of the war shall prejudice this independence and integrity.

(*September 16*).—I am inclined to point out to Turkish Government that, so long as they maintain neutrality, what we have said to them already holds good. . . . Perhaps we might also say that, if they break the peace we cannot be responsible for the consequences; that we hope they will keep the peace, but whether they do so or not is their own affair.

Turkey, it will be seen, could have secured, if she had so chosen, the most positive guarantees of independence and integrity from the three Allied Powers. This offer of friendship remained open in spite, as we have next to show, of long-continued provocation. "I think," said Sir Edward Grey on October 11, "that our attitude during the past eight weeks has shown irrefutably that we desire to avoid a rupture with Turkey." The recital which follows shows more than that. It shows that Great Britain, in her desire that an old friendship should not be broken, treated Turkish provocation with a forbearance, an indulgence, which, it may be asserted with confidence, has never been surpassed in the history of diplomacy.

#### *Turkish Promises of Neutrality*

Never have promise and performance been more at variance than they were in Turkey during August

September, and October, 1914. It would be tedious and superfluous to cite all the promises of Turkish neutrality which, as recorded in the White Book, were given to the British Ambassador. A few samples, of successive dates, will suffice :—

(*August 4*).—Grand Vizier to-day renewed assurances that Turkey intends to observe strict neutrality.

(*August 9*).—I have received a most emphatic assurance from the Grand Vizier that nothing will induce Turkey to join Austria and Germany as long as he remains in power.

(*August 13*).—I [the Turkish Ambassador in London] inform you forthwith that the Turkish Government are determined to maintain strict neutrality.

(*August 27*).—Grand Vizier solemnly assured me that Turkish Government would not depart from their neutrality. He fully understood Germany's aims in this matter, and all Turkish Government were determined not to fall into the trap.

(*September 21*).—The Sultan said he and his Government were not going to depart from their neutrality. His Majesty repeated this more than once.

(*September 28*).—I have received a despatch from the Sublime Porte defining the rules which they propose to apply during the war in order to defend their neutrality.

(*October 12*).—Grand Vizier repeated that he was absolutely determined to avoid war in any case.

(*October 23*).—Last night Minister of Marine sent me message to say that neutrality would be maintained by Turkish Government. He gave same assurances in categorical terms yesterday to French Ambassador, and said that Minister of Interior's views were the same. Ambassador said that it was reported that an agreement existed with Germany to go to war on certain terms being fulfilled. Minister of Marine denied this absolutely, and also declared that Turkey was not going to war.



Five days later an advance towards the Suez Canal began,—an act of war against Great Britain as the Power in occupation of Egypt; and Turkish torpedo-boats committed unprovoked acts of war against Russia in the Black Sea. But this was only the overt climax of a long course of ambiguous action which had been going on all through the time when Turkish Ministers were furnishing the British Government with solemn promises of neutrality.

*The Coming of the "Goeben"*

This part of the story begins with the *Goeben*, the German battle-cruiser which, with the cruiser *Breslau*, was in the Mediterranean at the outbreak of war. Chased by the British and French fleets, and escaping from the Straits of Messina, the two German ships entered the Dardanelles on August 10th. Small boats from the *Breslau* committed acts of war against British and French ships, while the *Goeben* proceeded up the Straits to Constantinople. The duty of the Turkish Government, as a neutral, was by the Law of Nations perfectly clear. It was to require the belligerent ships to leave within twenty-four hours, or else to disarm and lay them up. The story of what actually happened forms a curious chapter in Turkish diplomacy. First, the Turkish Government told Great Britain that they had bought the ships, and that "officers and men would be allowed to return to Germany." (The word "allowed" should be noted.) In order to disarm British suspicion, the Grand Vizier asked that the British naval mission under Admiral Limpus (which had been sent to Turkey

some time before to assist in re-organising the navy) might be allowed to remain. Sir Edward Grey replied that it would so be allowed, if the crews of the German ships were returned to Germany at once, and if the transfer to Turkey were *bona fide*, "so that they can only reappear as Turkish ships with Turkish crews" (August 12th). Admiral Limpus was assured by the Minister of Marine that Turkish crews would be provided as soon as possible (August 14th); but on the following day the Admiral and all the other British officers were removed from their executive commands and ordered, if they remained, to confine their activities within the Ministry of Marine. In view of the Grand Vizier's request, this was a serious slight upon the British Admiral; but so anxious were the British Government to maintain friendly relations that the slight was overlooked until September 8th, when Sir Edward Grey and the British Ambassador simultaneously considered that the naval mission could not without serious loss of dignity remain any longer. It was forthwith withdrawn.

Negotiations had meanwhile been proceeding about the German crews. They were to be "allowed" to return to Germany, but they showed no desire to avail themselves of the permission. On August 18th the British Ambassador called the Grand Vizier's attention to the serious breach of neutrality involved, and asked when he proposed to send the crews off. "His Highness said that he deeply deplored this breach of neutrality, which he could not deny. He begged me to give him time to get rid of German crews, which he promised he would do gradually, but,



until arrival of Turkish transport with crews from London, Turkish Government had no crew to replace Germans." Time was given, and was used apparently to repair the *Goeben*. By August 22nd the Turkish transport had arrived, and the British Ambassador asked the Minister of Marine when the German crews would be repatriated. "He said that it depended upon the Grand Vizier." The Ambassador made "strong representations" to the Grand Vizier. The crews remained, and presently were reinforced from Germany. On September 1st, the Minister of Marine told the Russian Ambassador that the German sailors would be sent away "in a fortnight"; and to the British Ambassador the Grand Vizier "reiterated with much vehemence that all German sailors should go." They did not go, but ammunition for the *Goeben* came from Germany. On September 7th the British Ambassador reported evidence showing that the ships had never been sold to Turkey at all. On September 21st the Sultan explained to the Ambassador that the Germans "had been kept for a short time to train the Turkish crews. The German crews would be sent away in five or ten days, and the officers also." They were not sent away. On October 2nd the Ambassador inquired of the Grand Vizier when the assurances, often given by his Highness and now "solemnly confirmed by his Imperial Majesty the Sultan," would be fulfilled. They were never fulfilled.

No clearer case, both of violated neutrality and of broken promises, has ever been recorded. This, however, was only one of many cases in which the Turkish

Government violated its neutrality in favour of Germany and gave provocation to Great Britain. With a gravity of face, in which Turkish diplomatists are never deficient, a little comedy was performed on September 28th. On that day the British Ambassador received from the Sublime Porte a Code of Regulations drawn up by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs "with a view to the observance of their duties of neutrality throughout the hostilities." The Ambassador found the Rules excellent; they were "closely in accord with the general principles held by His Majesty's Government"; the only objection was that almost every rule in the Code was being broken by the Turkish Government (see No. 145 in the White Paper).

### *The Closing of the Straits*

By successive International Treaties, the Straits are free at all times to merchant ships, and it is the duty of Turkey as guardian of the Straits to give this free passage. Nevertheless in the early days of the war, British passenger and grain ships were held up, ships wishing to leave Constantinople were refused papers, and grain ships were ordered to return to Constantinople. The excuse given by the Turkish Government was that, in consequence of some mines having become detached from their moorings, the vessels were held up to avoid accidents. The real reason the British Ambassador reported, was the wish of the military authorities to requisition grain and other cargoes (August 21).

The mining of the Straits was not in itself an



illegal act (so long as free passage for merchantmen was still secured); but in conjunction with other circumstances, it assumed a decidedly un-neutral character. By admission of Turkish Ministers, they were being urged by the Germans to send the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* into the Black Sea. By assertion of the same Ministers, this advice was not to be taken. Yet at the same time mines were laid under German control in the Straits, so that, if an act of belligerency were committed in the Black Sea in the German interest by the Turco-German ships, the other belligerents would be debarred from entering on a chase. What kind of a neutrality was this ?

#### *Constantinople as a German Camp*

But there was more going on still. On the outbreak of the European war the Grand Vizier said that "the retention of the German military mission meant nothing and had no political significance. As they had offered to remain, it would have been ungracious to refuse." This was perhaps a euphemism for: "As they refused to leave, it would be difficult to get rid of them." But now contrast the treatment of the British naval mission, recorded above, with that of the German military mission: The forts at the Dardanelles were given German garrisons; contingents of German officers continually arrived; a German officer was placed in command at the Dardanelles; German merchantmen were being armed in the port of Constantinople; large consignments of guns and artillery material were arriving from

Germany; German reservists in Turkey were instructed to report for enrolment with Turkish troops (September 10th). "Constantinople and the neighbourhood," said the British Ambassador to the Grand Vizier (September 20th), "formed nothing more nor less than an armed German camp. Many more German officers and men had arrived, and there must now be between 4,000 and 5,000 German soldiers and sailors here. We all, including his Highness, were at the mercy of Liman Pasha [General Liman von Sanders, head of the German Military mission] and the Minister of War." [Enver Pasha.]

### *British Forbearance*

What kind of neutrality was all this? Yet the British Government, in their earnest desire to preserve good relations with the Sultan, still had patience. Instead of breaking off relations, they contented themselves with a not unfriendly remonstrance:—

(*To the Grand Vizier, September 23*).—The fact that Great Britain has not taken any hostile action against Turkey must not mislead Turkish Government into supposing that His Majesty's Government consider Turkey's attitude is consistent with the obligations imposed upon her by the neutrality which she has officially declared. German officers and men are participating increasingly in Turkish fleet and Dardanelles defences, and not only has Turkey failed to send away the German officers and crews, as she promised, but she has admitted more overland, and they are now in active control of the *Goeben* and *Breslau*. The capital is undoubtedly now under the control of the Germans. If His Majesty's Government so desired, present

state of things affords ample justification for protesting against violation of neutrality. Great Britain has not, however, so far taken action, as she cherishes the hope that the Peace party will win the day.

### *The "Capitulations"*

The Grand Vizier, it should be remembered, professed himself to be leading a Peace party, and was constant in assurance that he would never consent to war. Accepting his professions and in the hope of strengthening his hands, the British Government not only overlooked the breaches of neutrality, above described, but, in another respect, showed great forbearance and indulgence. By a series of international treaties of long standing, subjects of foreign Powers enjoy certain privileges in Turkey; such as being tried not by Turkish courts, but by jurisdictions of their own consuls. These treaty-rights are known as the "Capitulations." The question of abolishing the Capitulations had been mooted to the British Ambassador on August 20th (see above, p. 7.) Suddenly, on September 9th, the Grand Vizier announced that by a stroke of the pen the Turkish Government intended to abolish the Capitulations; that is, to break their treaties with foreign Powers. The Powers, including Germany,<sup>1</sup> protested; but the British Government showed a most friendly disposition. They could not, of course, consent to

<sup>1</sup> "The German Ambassador," Sir L. Mallet reported, "has disclaimed authorship of this move on the part of Turkey," and he joined in the protest. He may not have wished to strengthen the hands of the Peace party.



the abrogation of a treaty by the high-handed action of one of the parties to it; but Sir Edward Grey said that, if Turkey maintained her neutrality, Great Britain would "be prepared to consider reasonable concessions about Capitulations" (September 16th). A similarly accommodating disposition was shown in another matter. By arrangements between Turkey and certain foreign Powers, the latter have their own Post Offices in Turkey. On September 21st, without any reference or information to the British Ambassador, the Turkish Government told the British Postmaster in Turkey that the foreign post offices would be abolished as from October 1st. Here, again, while protesting against the Turkish procedure, the British Government were willing to consent to large modifications in the postal system in the direction of establishing the Turkish Government as masters in their own house. In the end they went further and with a reservation of principle closed the British post offices (October 1st). The desire of the British Government was both to prove their friendliness in that way, and also to strengthen the hands of the Grand Vizier, as aforesaid. "Abolition of the Capitulations," the Ambassador had reported, "is now the principal card in the hands of the Peace party." It might reasonably be supposed that they would gain some prestige if they could accomplish reforms pleasing to the *amour propre* of Turkey. The British Government appreciated the point, and, as above described, met the Turkish Government half way.

This was an obvious proof of British friendliness.

That friendliness, accompanied by great forbearance, remained proof against continually increasing provocations ; for some of the most serious cases of Turkish breaches of sincere neutrality, and some of the most suspiciously hostile designs, still remain to be noticed.

### *Invasion of Egypt Threatened*

“ The Grand Vizier vehemently denies that it is his intention to attack Egypt in any way or to attempt any sort of intrigues there.” So the British Ambassador reported on August 25th, and he believed the Grand Vizier personally to be sincere. How far the disclaimer of his Highness was consistent with things done by others will be gathered from what follows. The British Ambassador summarised the proceedings to the Grand Vizier compendiously and not (as will be seen) too strongly, as “ a course of veiled hostility and petty intrigue against the British Empire ” (September 25th). The veil was thin. It consisted of a pretence that nothing was being done except of a purely defensive character ; everything, it was alleged, was part of a general mobilisation as a defensive precaution which was within the rights of a neutral.

At the end of August the British representative in Egypt (Mr. Cheetham) began to report to Sir Edward Grey sure evidence of a contemplated attack on Egypt. The despatches in the White Paper from August 28th onwards contain accumulating reports to that effect from various quarters. A few typical instances are given here, followed by a short summary in the words of Sir Edward Grey :—

“Egyptian frontier has been violated by armed mounted Arabs said to be encouraged by Turkish troops, and Hedjaz line is being reserved for troops.” (Sept. 24.)

“Turkish preparations on Sinai frontier, 2,000 men with stores passed Gaza on night of 18th September following coast towards frontier.” (Sept. 25.)

“Two Germans connected with Bagdad railway, one of whom is an expert in blasting operations and mine-laying, left Aleppo this morning for Damascus, the other telling his servant that they were going to Akaba. They had with them 1,600 dynamite cartridges and 1,500 metres of detonating wires.” (Sept. 25.)

“Numbers of German officers dispatched to Syria to superintend preparation and training of corps there for war, concentration of stores and supplies at suitable spots, preparation of lines of communication and defence of coast.” (Oct. 15.)

“Local authorities at Jaffa have distributed 10,000 rifles amongst Bedouins. Bedouins have been employed to dig wells and Germans to fit them with motor pumps. It is believed the next move is to be towards Akaba.” (Oct. 16.)

“One Bouhadi Sadil has been discovered buying arms for importation into Egypt. He had already bought 700 Gras rifles and ammunition. I understand that two of this man's accomplices were recently convicted in Egypt.” (Athens, Oct. 17.)

“Naval parties are on their way both to Akaba and the Persian Gulf, as well as smaller groups to Syrian coast towns. There are plenty of German reserve mercantile marine officers available.” (Oct. 19.)

These are only a few samples of what was going on. The British Ambassador, in Notes dated September 23rd and October 2nd, brought these and many other things to the attention of the Grand Vizier, and on



October 24th Sir Edward Grey instructed the Ambassador thus :—

You should enumerate to Grand Vizier the hostile acts of which we complain, and warn him that, if German influences succeed in pushing Turkey to cross the frontiers of Egypt and threaten the international Suez Canal, which we are bound to preserve, it will not be we, but Turkey, that will have aggressively disturbed the *status quo*. The following is a convenient summary of Turkish acts of which we complain and which, combined, produce a most unfavourable impression. You might send it to Grand Vizier :—

The Mosul and Damascus Army Corps have, since their mobilisation, been constantly sending troops south preparatory to an invasion of Egypt and the Suez Canal from Akaba and Gaza. A large body of Bedouin Arabs has been called out and armed to assist in this venture. Transport has been collected and roads have been prepared up to the frontier of Egypt. Mines have been dispatched to be laid in the Gulf of Akaba to protect the force from naval attack, and the notorious Sheikh Aziz Shawish, who has been so well known as a firebrand in raising Moslem feeling against Christians, has published and disseminated through Syria, and probably India, an inflammatory document urging Mohammedans to fight against Great Britain. Dr. Prüffer, who was so long engaged in intrigues in Cairo against the British occupation, and is now attached to the German Embassy in Constantinople, has been busily occupied in Syria in trying to incite the people to take part in this conflict.

The Turco-German intrigues, alluded to at the end of Sir E. Grey's despatch, deserve some detailed notice, because they afford additional, and conclusive, refutation of the "defensive" plea of the Turkish Government.

*Intrigues and Plots in Egypt*

In these intrigues and plots, Turks and Germans collaborated. On September 1st the British Ambassador at Constantinople learnt that Sulleiman-el-Burouni, a highly placed Senator, was in Egypt engaged in fomenting a revolutionary movement. A letter belonging to a Turkish naval officer in Egypt was found ; it stated that he had been doing his best to cause a strike amongst Moslem stokers and engineers on four Khedivial mail steamers, which were to be used as transports for British troops, and that he would try to sink the vessels after the troops had embarked. The presence of Indian troops in Egypt suggested a curious plot. His Majesty's Consul at Aleppo reported that a tailor in that town had been commissioned to make a variety of Indian costumes and head-dresses on design and measurement supplied by German officers there. German agents impersonating Indian soldiers might have been useful to the plotters. The interrogation of a German agent, in the Alexandria City Police, who was caught at Alexandria, on his return from leave, with a bag containing detonators for bombs, produced some interesting revelations. This man, Lieutenant Mula-zim Awal Robert Casimir Otto Mors, arrived at Constantinople on September 4th, and put up at the Germania Hotel. He met Dr. Prüffer, who introduced him to a Turkish staff officer. He met Enver Pasha (the Turkish Minister for War), and also Sheikh Shawish. It was explained to him that there were emissaries in Egypt "fomenting trouble, to prepare

the way for a Turkish invasion, and to compel the British to split up their forces." Plans were discussed for destroying the embankment which separates the fresh-water Canal and the Suez Canal, and for sinking vessels laden with cement in the latter. Recipes for making bombs were studied, and a secret code was devised by which Mors in Egypt was to correspond with Dr. Prüffer in Constantinople. "Cotton" appeared in the Code; "best quality" meaning "British troops."

### *Anti-British Propaganda*

Such "defensive" preparations as these were, however, only part of wider intrigues. Turks and Germans between them engaged in a campaign of anti-British propaganda throughout the Moslem world. Emissaries were "sent to India, the Yemen, Senoussi, Persia, to stir up feeling against Great Britain." Bimbashi Gamel, a staff officer in the Turkish Army, with others, went from Smyrna in order to carry on a Turcophile propaganda in India. A manifesto was secretly circulated from Beirout inciting Moslem soldiers to mutiny in their respective countries, deserting the Allies and joining Germany. "About 600 Moslem *fedahis*, dressed in various guises, have arrived at Aleppo, their head being an officer related to Ottoman Minister of War. They intrigued, with the aid of Committee of Union and Progress, with Sheikhs against Great Britain" (October 14th). Every kind of lie was brought into play. "With the object of spreading the belief that Great Britain



is the enemy of Islam, the German Embassy daily emits a stream of mendacity and calumny, which is circulated throughout the country by the Turkish newspapers, all of those in the capital being in the pay of the German Embassy as a result of the large sums spent by it in corruption both in Constantinople and in the provinces" (October 14th). As the Turkish press was under the most rigid censorship, the Turkish Government could not claim complete irresponsibility in this matter. The German Ambassador was instructed from Berlin to publish widely reports of a revolution in India (September 14th). On October 23rd it was announced that the Ameer of Afghanistan had started a Holy War and was invading India. But the masterpiece was this: "Moslems in Aleppo district are reported to have been so inveigled and incited by German and Turkish deliberate official misrepresentations and falsehoods of every kind that masses seem to believe German Emperor has embraced Islamic faith, and that Germans are fighting for Islam against Russia" (October 14th).

A less amusing but a more malicious statement should be noticed: "One of objects of press campaign now is to prove that Great Britain is aiming deliberate blows at Islam as such, and a statement is being circulated here (Constantinople) that British Government are preventing pilgrimages from Egypt this year" (October 22nd).

*German Gold*

Such, then, as detailed on preceding pages, were the provocations which Great Britain received from Turkey. So persistent, however, was Great Britain's friendly forbearance that even yet Turkey might have had peace, if she had so wished. Russia, it should be added, was like-minded, and overlooked proceedings which, if she had desired to quarrel, would have afforded just and abundant ground. What, then, was the situation towards the end of October? Great Britain had given no ground of offence. The Allied Powers had undertaken to respect the integrity and independence of Turkey, if she remained honestly neutral. She had committed flagrant violations of neutrality, but the Allies had held their hands. She had instigated, or connived at, intrigues and hostile preparations against Egypt, but Great Britain had still left the door open. The Grand Vizier was still talking peace, and on October 23rd other Turkish Ministers were still promising neutrality. A few days later it was open war. What was passing behind the scenes, will perhaps never be fully known; but it is relevant to state one fact: German officers and German arms and ammunition had already come; on October 23rd the British Ambassador learnt that very large quantities of gold had come also; "it is probable that between two and three millions have arrived altogether."

*War made by Turkey*

Three days later, pretences were thrown aside. On October 26th two thousand armed Bedouins, advancing to attack the Suez Canal, watered at Magdaba, which is twenty miles inside the Egyptian frontier. This was an act of war against Great Britain. Before dawn on October 29th Turkish torpedo boats raided Odessa harbour ; sank a Russian gunboat ; damaged French and Russian steamships, and bombarded the town. This was an act of war against Russia.

The Russian Government thereupon instructed their Ambassador to leave Constantinople forthwith. Sir Edward Grey instructed the British Ambassador to do likewise, "unless within twelve hours the Turkish Government will divest themselves of all responsibility for those unprovoked acts of hostility by dismissing the German military and naval missions." The Minister of the Interior, in conversation with the representative of a neutral Power, "practically admitted that Turkey had thrown in her lot with Germany." Sir L. Mallet had "a very painful interview" with the Grand Vizier, who said that he had been kept in the dark as to the intentions of his colleagues. On the afternoon of October 30th the Russian, French, and British Ambassadors asked for their passports.

*Double-dealing at Constantinople*

Such was the course of events leading to the rupture of relations with Turkey. It is a tale on the one hand of great patience and forbearance on



the side of the Allies, and on the other hand of great duplicity, or at any rate of markedly double dealing, on the part of the Turkish Government. The inner history of this dealing is not likely to be known for some time, and perhaps will never certainly be ascertained. There are many surmises in the White Paper; and for various views, cogent reasons may be found. It is right to say that the British Ambassador seems to have believed throughout in the sincerity of the Grand Vizier. He was equally convinced that Enver Pasha, the Minister of War, was throughout bent upon war. The Ambassador was witnessing, as he thought, a struggle between a Peace and a War party at the Porte. Sometimes he supposed that the Peace party was gaining ground; and whenever appearances pointed the other way, the Grand Vizier told him oracularly to wait and see. "His Highness begged me to have patience, as he was gaining authority" (August 26th). "Grand Vizier assured me most emphatically that my fears were entirely without foundation" (August 27th). "He (the Grand Vizier) would never allow the Minister of War or anyone else to supersede him." "In spite of appearances, which he admitted looked bad, nothing would happen" (September 20th.)

The fact remains that the Grand Vizier became in the end the instrument of the war party. At times, the British Ambassador thought (and the Russian Ambassador did not regard the idea as negligible) that the Turks were playing with the Germans. "I think that they have allowed preparations to be made, partly to profit as much as possible by German

connection and by allowing the Germans to think that they will act, and partly in order to be ready, if Great Britain sustains a serious defeat by land or sea" (September 24th). But the Turks acted, not when Great Britain had sustained any such defeat but when Russia had inflicted a reverse upon Germany on the Vistula; in other words, not at a time most favourable to the Turks, but at a time most desirable to the Germans. "I think," said the British Ambassador again, "that self-interested designs of Germany are not unknown to the Turks, who are playing up to Germany, not with the intention of falling in with those designs, at any rate for the present, to the extent of making war, but in order to extract as much as possible from her" (October 5th). Some may think that the Turks were playing rather with the Allies, than with the Germans; and others that to German inducements was added duress. But such speculations, though of curious and elusive interest, do not touch the main point, which is this:—that the Allies, whatever their theories of the situation at Constantinople may have been, acted consistently and persistently in the interests of peace; that the Turks, however divided their councils may have been, acted also consistently and persistently in the direction of war.

#### *Provocation and Forbearance*

The Turks made an attempt at the end to shift the burden of responsibility to Great Britain. The Turkish Ambassador in London called at the Foreign

Office on October 31st to inquire what all the fuss was about. He called again on November 2nd and handed in a telegraphic note from the Grand Vizier in which his Highness "hoped that His Majesty's Government will be willing, in witness of their reciprocal desire to maintain intact the friendly relations of the two countries, to put an end, at the earliest possible moment, to the rupture of diplomatic relations which they have just provoked."

A perusal of the foregoing pages will have enabled the reader to judge on which side lay the provocation, and on which, friendly forbearance. As the facts become known throughout the world, all loyal Moslem subjects of the British Sovereign, under whose rule every race and creed enjoy liberty and protection, are likely to agree with the views expressed by the Nizam of Hyderabad in a letter to the Viceroy :—

As a true Mohammedan who has the welfare of his community at heart, and who takes a just pride in the glorious traditions of the Mohammedan nation, I view with profound grief the unwise, short-sighted, and futile course adopted by Turkey in joining Germany as an ally. The British Government has spared no efforts to avoid war with Turkey.

How true that is, the White Paper, summarised in this pamphlet, shows conclusively. Turkey was offered the friendship of the Allies and a guarantee of her independence and integrity. She has chosen instead war with the Allies and an alliance with Germany. She must take the consequences.



*The Consequences*

Great Britain and her Allies will make no war on Islam, but the political rule of the Turk will be terminated. Both these points were made clear in Mr. Asquith's speech at the Guildhall Banquet (November 9th):—

“When this war began three months ago we made it clear, in conjunction with our Allies, to the Turkish Government that if they remained neutral their Empire should not suffer in integrity or in authority. The statesmen of that unhappy polity, sharply divided in opinion, vacillating in council from day to day, allowed their true interests to be undermined and overborne by German threats, by German ships, by German gold. They were tempted to one futile outrage after another—first the lawless bombardment of Russian open ports, then the equally lawless intrusion into Egyptian territory—until the Allies, Russia, France, and ourselves, who had withstood with unexampled patience a protracted series of flouts, veiled menaces, and impudent equivocations, were compelled to yield to the logic of facts and to recognise Turkey as an open enemy.

“I wish to make it clear, not only to my fellow countrymen, but to the world outside, that this is not our doing. It is in spite of our hopes and efforts and against our will. It is not the Turkish people, it is the Ottoman Government that has drawn the sword, and which, I do not hesitate to predict, will perish by the sword. It is they and

not we who have rung the death knell of the Ottoman dominion, not only in Europe, but in Asia. With their disappearance, at least, will disappear, as I at least hope and believe, the blight which for generations past has withered some of the fairest regions of the earth.

“ We have no quarrel with the Mussulman subjects of the Sultan. Our Sovereign claims amongst the most loyal of his subjects millions of men who hold the Mussulman faith. Nothing is further from our thoughts or intentions than to initiate or encourage a crusade against their creed. Their Holy Places we are prepared, if any such need should arise, to defend against all invaders and keep them inviolate.

“ The Turkish Empire has committed suicide, and dug with its own hands its grave.”







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